Addiction Science Reviews

Addiction Science Reviews Vol. 1 Issue.1
Doi:10.35365/asr.26.1.02

REVIEW ARTICLE / DERLEME YAZISI

The Relationship Between Psychoactive Drug Use and Cultural and Religious Attitudes

Psikoaktif Madde Kullanımı ile Kültürel ve Dini Tutumlar Arasındaki İlişki

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Abstract:

Psychoactive substance use is influenced not only by biological, psychological, and social factors but also by cultural and religious determinants. These factors are known to shape individuals' attitudes toward substance use. The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between psychoactive substance use and cultural and religious attitudes. The study was conducted as a review by systematically examining relevant national and international literature. The literature search was conducted in PsycINFO, PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, with a focus on studies published between 2004 and 2025. The search included the keywords "substance use," "drug abuse," "psychoactive substances," "risk factors," "family and substance use," "culture," "religion," and "genetic factors addiction." The findings indicate significant relationships between substance use and cultural and religious attitudes. While no clear association was found between tobacco use and these attitudes, cultural and religious factors were found to play a more influential role in the use of alcohol and other psychoactive substances. In particular, religious attitudes were observed to have a protective effect in reducing psychoactive substance use in certain groups. Cultural attitudes were also found to play a determining role in individuals' substance use behaviors. The reviewed studies demonstrate that substance use tendencies vary according to individuals' forms of cultural adaptation. Religious beliefs appear to have a protective function in some groups; however, this effect varies across cultural contexts. Overall, there is a significant relationship between substance use and cultural and religious attitudes, and this relationship varies across different social contexts. Therefore, prevention programs should take cultural and religious structures into account and develop context-specific strategies.

Keywords: Psychoactive substances, Substance use, Cultural attitudes, Religious attitudes.

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Date of Received/Geliş Tarihi: 03.04.2026, **Date of Revision/Düzeltme Tarihi:** 24.04.2026, **Date of Acceptance/Kabul Tarihi:** 22.04.2026, **Date of Online Publication/Çevirimiçi Yayın Tarihi:** 29.04.2026

Citing/Referans Gösterimi: Bayramoğlu, R., Çakıcı, M. & Oğul, S. (2026). The relationship between psychoactive drug yse and cultural and religious attitudes, *Addiction Science Reviews, 1*(1), 12-21, Doi: 10.35365/asr.26.1.02

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Öz:

Psikoaktif madde kullanımı, biyolojik, psikolojik ve sosyal etkenlerin yanı sıra kültürel ve dini faktörlerden de etkilenmektedir. Bu faktörlerin bireylerin madde kullanımına yönelik tutumlarını şekillendirdiği bilinmektedir. Bu çalışmada, psikoaktif madde kullanımı ile kültürel ve dini tutumlar arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Çalışma, ilgili ulusal ve uluslararası literatür taranarak derleme yöntemleri kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Literatür taraması PsycINFO, PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science ve Google Scholar veritabanlarında, 2004–2025 yılları arasında yayımlanan çalışmalarla sınırlandırılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Taramada "substance use", "drug abuse", "psychoactive substances", "risk factors", "family and substance use", "culture", "religion" ve "genetic factors addiction" anahtar kelimeleri kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular, madde kullanımı ile kültürel ve dini tutumlar arasında anlamlı ilişkiler olduğunu göstermektedir. Tütün kullanımı ile bu tutumlar arasında belirgin bir ilişki bulunmazken, alkol ve diğer psikoaktif maddelerin kullanımında kültürel ve dini faktörlerin etkili olduğu görülmektedir. Ayrıca dini tutumların, özellikle bazı gruplarda, psikoaktif madde kullanımını azaltıcı yönde etkilediği belirlenmiştir. Kültürel tutumların ise bireylerin madde kullanım davranışları üzerinde belirleyici bir rol oynadığı görülmektedir. İncelenen çalışmalar, bireylerin benimsedikleri kültürel uyum biçimlerine göre psikoaktif madde kullanım eğilimlerinin farklılaştığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma, farklı sosyokültürel arka planlara sahip öğrencilerin madde kullanımına yönelik tutumlarının değişkenlik gösterdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Dini inançların bazı gruplarda koruyucu rol oynadığı, ancak bu etkinin kültürel bağlama göre farklılaştığı anlaşılmaktadır. Madde kullanımı ile kültürel ve dini tutumlar arasında önemli bir ilişki bulunmaktadır ve bu ilişki toplumsal bağlama göre değişmektedir. Önleme programları geliştirilirken kültürel ve dini yapı dikkate alınmalı, toplumlara özgü stratejiler oluşturulmalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Psikoaktif maddeler, Madde kullanımı, Kültürel tutumlar, Dini tutumlar.

Introduction

Substance abuse is a pathological behavioral pattern that negatively impacts an individual's mental, physical, and social functioning, and is considered a significant global public health problem (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2024). Psychoactive substance use disorders have serious consequences not only on individual health but also on societal well-being, healthcare systems, and the economic burden (Degenhardt et al., 2018). With the increase in substance use in recent years, it has been the subject of various investigative studies. The dangers it poses negatively affect individuals' health, economy, family, and social relationships; in cases of dependency, it threatens an individual's quality of life (Aslan et al., 2023). Additionally, even if psychoactive substances are perceived as harmless, they have negative effects, especially for young people. Psychoactive use among young people is widespread; however, it poses significant risks to psychological, social, and physical well-being (Avcı, 2025).

The history of addictive substances is described by experts as being "thousands of years old, "as old as human history. The use of naturally occurring substances such as opium, cannabis, cocaine, and meskelin dates back to prehistoric times (Zeman, Söyler ve Altıntoprak, 2019). Substance use is as old as human history; archaeological and historical findings show that psychoactive plants and other substances were discovered thousands of years ago to alter people's states of mind, for medicinal purposes, and in ritual (Crocq, 2007). According to the history of substance use, wine was used by the early Egyptians, drugs were used since 4000 B.C., and marijuana, which was used for medical treatment, since 2737 B.C. in China (Charitos, Gagliano-Candela, Santacroce, and Bottalico, 2021; Pisanti and Bifulco, 2019).

According to World Bank data, the prevalence of tobacco use was 34% in East Asia and the Pacific, 35% in Europe and Central Asia, 32% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 21% in the Middle East and North Africa, and 20% in South Asia. It is reported that 185 million adults worldwide have issues related to illicit substance use (Anderson, 2006). In the United States, lifetime alcohol use rates are reported to be between 83.7% and 84.8% (Maxwell et al., 2006). Similarly, in other countries, substance use rates included Cambodia at 4%, China at 6%, Hong Kong at 0.5%, Indonesia at 2.5%, Macau at 0.1%, Malaysia at 2.1%, Myanmar at 0.9%, the Philippines at 2.1%, Vietnam at 0.2%, Egypt at 9.6%, and America at 10.3% (Devaney et al., 2007; Yi et al., 2017). In Turkey, the lifetime prevalence of substance use was 1.3%, with higher rates among males than females, and substance use between ages 15-24 was higher than in older age groups (Ögel, 2005). Additionally, a household study conducted in 2015 with 994 participants showed that at least once, tobacco use was 62.7%, alcohol use was 72.1%, and OPD use was 13.2% (Çakıcı et al., 2015).

Over time, the increase in substance use has led to a diversification of substances. This raises the question: what motivates people to seek out substances? According to Mokhtarpoor, Tehranineshat, Naderi, and Amirinia (2024), substance use is a complex phenomenon that does not have a clear explanation regarding its motivations. However, further studies show that motivations for substance use involve biological, psychological, and sociological factors. Substance use often produces euphoria, increasing energy, power, and self-confidence, which can make individuals feel good. At the same time, under the guise of feeling better, people facing social phobia, stress, depression, and discomfort use substances to reduce these negative feelings. Some individuals also pursue increased physical or cognitive performance by taking prescription stimulants or anabolic steroids to improve their abilities. Young people are more likely to be influenced by their peers and to engage in risky behaviors than older individuals, as a way of demonstrating independence from family and social control (NIDA, 2014).

In recent years, many biological, social, and psychological reasons have been described to understand psychoactive substance use. However, in addition to risk factors, the impact of culture and religious attitudes has also become a topic of discussion. Each society has its own culture and social issues, and the idea that religious attitudes influence the increase or decrease of psychoactive substance use has become widespread. The aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between psychoactive substance use and cultural and religious attitudes.

Method

Research Design

This study is a qualitative thematic review that systematically analyzes the literature on individual and environmental factors influencing psychoactive substance use. In this research, existing academic studies were classified and interpreted using thematic analysis.

Literature Search Process

The literature search was conducted using the following databases: Google Scholar, PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and the National Thesis Center of Türkiye (YÖK Tez Merkezi). The following keywords were used during the search process:

The literature search was conducted using the keywords "substance use," "drug abuse," "risk factors for substance use," "psychoactive substances," "family and substance use," "culture and drug use," "religion and substance use," and "genetic factors addiction." As a result of the search process, 168 academic studies were initially identified.

The studies included in the analysis were selected according to specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria consisted of studies published between 2004 and 2025, peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, or official reports, studies directly examining substance use and related risk or protective factors, studies with full-text availability, studies written in Turkish or English, and studies related to psychology, sociology, epidemiology, neurobiology, or human behavior. Studies were excluded if they were not directly related to the topic, were editorials or short commentaries, did not provide full-text access, were duplicate publications, or focused solely on pharmacological or clinical descriptions without including social dimensions.

During the study selection process, 34 studies were excluded because they were not relevant to the topic, 22 studies were removed as duplicates, 18 studies were excluded due to lack of full-text access, and 21 studies were excluded because they were purely clinical or pharmacological and did not include social variables. Following this screening process, 73 studies were included for full-text review. In the final stage, after quality assessment and evaluation of thematic relevance, 52 studies were included in the final analysis sample.

The selected studies were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Content analysis refers to the systematic process of extracting meaningful information from texts and categorizing it into coherent themes and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The literature data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis approach. First, the selected 52 studies were read repeatedly to develop a comprehensive understanding of their content. Then, the studies were examined line by line, and meaningful segments were coded. These codes included terms such as "accessibility," "peer influence," "family structure," "psychological stress," "impulsivity," "genetic vulnerability," "cultural norms," and "religious beliefs." Similar codes were then grouped together to form higher-order themes. The generated themes were compared with the existing literature to assess consistency and validity. Finally, the themes were conceptually refined, clearly defined, and finalized for presentation in the study.

Result

Table 1. *Thematic Distribution and Key Findings of the Included Studies*

Author(s) & Year	Type of Study	Sample	Theme	Key / Clinical Findings
Anderson (2006)	Review / Global report	N/A	Access to substances and environmental factors	Alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use are globally prevalent; accessibility increases usage rates.
TUBİM (2022)	Official report	Population of Türkiye	Access to substances and environmental factors	Türkiye's geographical location plays a critical role in drug trafficking and affects supply–demand balance.
Dong et al. (2025)	Quantitative study	Community-based sample	Access to substances and environmental factors	Strong association between substance accessibility and use, mediated by environmental disorder.
Barrett & Turner (2006)	Longitudinal quantitative study	Adolescents and young adults	Social environment, family structure, and peer influence	Higher substance use risk among individuals from single-parent families.
Lac & Crano (2009)	Meta-analysis	Adolescent samples	Social environment, family structure, and peer influence	Parental monitoring is a strong protective factor against substance use.
Maxwell (2002)	Quantitative study	Adolescents	Social environment, family structure, and peer influence	Peer influence is a strong predictor of substance use behavior.

Author(s) & Year	Type of Study	Sample	Theme	Key / Clinical Findings
Koob & Schulkin (2019)	Neurobiological review	Clinical and experimental studies	Psychological factors	Stress systems and allostatic load play a key role in addiction development.
Conrod et al. (2008)	Intervention study	Adolescents	Psychological factors	Personality-targeted interventions delay onset of substance use.
Terracciano et al. (2008)	Personality-based quantitative study	Adult sample	Psychological factors	Low conscientiousness and high impulsivity associated with substance use.
Dick & Agrawal (2008)	Genetic review	Twin and family studies	Biological/genetic factors	Hereditary factors play a significant role in substance dependence.
Schaefer et al. (2023)	Longitudinal twin study	Young adults	Biological/genetic factors	Genetic vulnerability strongly influences nicotine, alcohol, and cannabis use.
Gerring et al. (2024)	Genetic analysis	Clinical/genetic dataset	Biological/genetic factors	Substance use disorders associated with polygenic risk.
Hofstede (2011)	Theoretical study	N/A	Cultural norms and social structure	Culture defined as collective mental programming shaping behavior.
Sudhinaraset et al. (2016)	Review	N/A	Cultural norms and social structure	Alcohol use influenced by cultural norms within a social-ecological framework.
Crocq (2007)	Historical-analytical review	N/A	Cultural norms and social structure	Substance use varies across historical and cultural contexts.
Livne et al. (2021)	Quantitative study	US adults	Religion and spiritual factors	Religiosity has a protective effect against substance use.
Rosmarin et al. (2022)	Longitudinal study	Adolescents	Religion and spiritual factors	Religious affiliation reduces initiation of substance use.
Hassan et al. (2023)	National epidemiological study	NESARC-III sample	Religion and spiritual factors	Spirituality slows progression of substance use behavior.

In the literature, the reviewed studies indicate that substance use cannot be attributed to a single cause and instead represents a multidimensional phenomenon. The findings demonstrate that accessibility and environmental conditions, family structure and peer influence, psychological characteristics, biological vulnerability, cultural norms, and religious factors collectively shape substance use behavior. Overall, the literature emphasizes that substance use is strongly associated not only with individual choices but also with broader social and structural determinants.

Definitions of Substance Use

People seek drugs for various reasons, such as to boost self-confidence, facilitate socializing, eliminate boredom, and promote relaxation. They are also used for medical purposes, and in ancient times, for cultural and social rituals (Maisto et al., 2010). According to the World Health Organization (WHO) report, a drug is defined as any chemical entity that alters biological functions and possibly structure, except for those necessary for maintaining normal health (World Health Organization (WHO, 2024). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) describes drugs as, in medicine, substances that can cure or prevent illness and enhance physical or mental health, and, in pharmacology, as chemicals that can alter the biochemical or physiological functions of an organism (UNODC, 2015). Therefore, the usage of drugs varies depending on people's needs and purposes.

Degenharth et al. (2004) refer to illicit drug use as the non-medical use of drugs that are banned by global law, such as amphetamine-type stimulants, cannabis, cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, and other opioids. As mentioned above, not all drugs are illicit, such as alcohol, caffeine, tobacco, and so on (UNODC, 2008). Despite this, it does not mean that licit drug use will not affect human well-being in negative ways. Drug Abuse: A 1988 study by Rinaldi defines drug abuse as ‘any use of drugs that causes physical, psychological, legal, or social harm to the individual or to others affected by the drug user’s behavior’ (Maisto et al., 2010).

Availability of Substance

Sanders and Smith (2025) stated that high availability of a substance is one of the underlying risk factors. To use a substance and develop an addiction to it, it must first be present; for example, heroin addiction cannot occur without heroin itself (Tosun, 2008). The ease of a substance's availability in the environment increases the likelihood of its use. If it is not available in the environment, the substance will consequently be unattainable. In some districts of Turkey, such as Dolapdere, Kasımpaşa, and Hacıhüsrev, where drugs are easy to find, substance use is quite prevalent among adolescents who grow up in these areas (Ögel, 2010).

Turkey's geographical location has made it a trade and cultural bridge between the East and West for hundreds of years. Due to this characteristic, Turkey is heavily affected by drug trafficking (TUBIM, 2022). These international trade and smuggling contexts can affect not only supply but also patterns of use within the country and the youth population's exposure to the substance. Furthermore, qualitative research among adolescents shows that accessibility and environmental social networks are important factors shaping substance use; peer groups and environmental conditions have been found to have an impact on motivations and behaviors for substance use (Avcı, 2025). This reveals that psychoactive substance use is not only related to individual preferences and levels of dependence, but also interacts with environmental access, sociocultural context, and national situation.

Effect of Social Environment on Substance Use

The environment is integral to an individual's decision to use substances. Initially, substance use attracts the person to a particular environment, and later, that environment becomes sought after due to substance abuse. There is a strong link between the environment and an individual's choice of substance. It is difficult for someone who abuses substances to hold a regular job and earn money to support their addiction, which leads them to find ways to return to the substance-using environment (Volkow et al., 2016). When considering the social environment in relation to substance use, the first factors that come to mind are family and peer relationships.

Family structure is an important component when considering family factors. Substance use problems during adolescence and young adulthood differ by family structure. While families are expected to protect their children from problem behaviors like substance use, it is generally observed that families with both parents tend to protect their children more effectively than single-parent families. Many studies support the idea that youngsters from single-parent families usually have higher rates of substance use (Barrett and Turner, 2005; Hoffmann, 2017). Additionally, some studies show that a family with both a mother and a father can better protect their children, especially when peer influence is not strong (Eitle, 2005). The quality of parenting skills is another essential factor in protecting children from problem behaviors. Velleman et al. (2005) indicated that good parenting skills are related to psychological well-being, lower stress levels, and being understanding, which help predict problem behaviors, including substance use and abuse.

Parental supervision and monitoring of children can also serve as protective factors against problem behaviors. Lac and Crano (2009) define parental monitoring as 'a set of correlated parenting behaviors involving attention to and tracking of the child's whereabouts, activities, and adaptations.' When parents know where their children are, who they are with, and what they are doing, it can help prevent problem behaviors. Therefore, strong parental monitoring can discourage children from substance use, thereby protecting non-using children from drug-using peers.

Psychological Factors in Substance Use

Substance and alcohol are consumed to overcome the difficulties caused by negative feelings such as unhappiness and problems encountered in daily life (Koob and Schulkin, 2019). There have been many reasons for substance abuse, and psychologists and researchers over time have tried to identify the various triggers that may lead to the problem. First and foremost, the focus of much attention by psychologists is the psychological tendency toward substance abuse. This can be due to a variety of issues, but primarily includes personality traits, psychodynamic processes, and learned cognitions and behaviors (Conrod et al., 2008). These psychological tendencies can trigger substance use as a coping mechanism for negative emotions; stress, anxiety, and depressive mood, in particular, can lead individuals to substances that provide short-term relief. Personality traits influence this risk level; high neuroticism, low self-control, and risk-taking tendencies play a critical role in initiating and maintaining substance use (Terracciano et al., 2008). Individual differences and learned behaviors combine to form a complex system that initiates and sustains substance use. Behavioral patterns and social learning acquired at an early age shape individuals' expectations regarding substance use, and these expectations reinforce use (Pinquart and Borgolte, 2025).

Personality Traits in Psychoactive Substance Use

Many studies have explored contrasts between individuals with substance use problems and others. Overall, these studies do not support the idea that individuals with substance use problems have different identities from others, and by the mid-1970s, one expert required a conclusion. In the alcohol field, Keller (1972) also proposed "Keller's Law," which states that regardless of an individual's personality traits, if they are addicted to substances, their behavior will align with their use. Identity exploration, however, has continued, and some studies have attempted to identify personality traits associated with the onset of heavy drinking and other substance use in youth. The results suggest that such use is more common among youth who show signs of pre–drug substance use or greater problems: defiance, adjustment issues, depression (Wymbs et al., 2014; Choi et al., 2016). Wasserman et al (2020) showed that there is a relation between alcohol use and certain personality traits like sensation seeking, impulsivity, psychopathy, nonconformity, and especially sensation seeking combined with impulsivity, which have significant effects on alcohol use. Another study examining the relationship between substance use and personality traits found that heavy drug and alcohol users exhibited less conscientiousness, impulse control, and agreeableness than non-users and mild users (Walton and Roberts, 2004, 515). Various studies have clarified that impulsivity is related to substance abuse and can be seen as a risk factor.

Biological Factors of Substance Use

Various studies indicate that alcoholism, drug use, and problem behaviors are related to heredity. Strong evidence shows that genes can influence both alcohol and illicit drug dependence (Dick and Agrawal, 2008; Deak and Johnson, 2021). Many twin studies demonstrate a connection between heredity and psychoactive drug use. According to the Virginia Twin Study of Adolescent Behavioral Development, heritability for lifetime tobacco use is 84%, alcohol use 72%, lifetime drug use 45%, and lifetime marijuana use 22% (Schaefer et al., 2023). The presence of neurobiological factors is more closely related to addiction. Taking drugs changes the number and shape of opiate receptors and causes an imbalance; this deteriorated structure leads to dependency. Additionally, low activity of opiates in the body also contributes to dependency. Neurotransmitters significant to psychoactive substances

include dopamine, serotonin, norepinephrine, GABA, glutamate, and endogenous opioids (Ebrahimi et al., 2024).

Culture

Defining the concept of culture is complex. American anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn compiled 164 definitions of culture by examining the concept of culture (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). According to Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede (2011), it is "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of a group from others." Matsumoto and Juang (2016) define culture as "the totality of values, norms, and patterns of behavior shared and learned by members of a society." Heyes (2020) stated that social learning is 'the totality of knowledge and behaviors acquired and shared by members of a group through social learning.' It is intended that a person's beliefs, understandings, way of perception, and behaviors will be shaped by the environment in which they are. Society members will be eligible in accordance with the general rules. Social norms, the shared rules that describe suitable and unsuitable behaviors; accepted public manners that people consider essential to their well-being, the socially required rewards and punishments that force people to obey norms, form important parts of a culture (Jiloha, 2009, 167). These norms regulate individuals' behavior and maintain the shared values of the cultural group; it is known that both formal and informal sanctions can be applied when these norms are not followed (Shulman et al., 2017). Therefore, culture functions as a dynamic system that both shapes individual behavior and directs intra-social interaction.

Culture and Psychoactive Drug Use

Therefore, cultural attitudes will affect how that object is perceived. Meaning attributed to that object will vary from culture to culture. Therefore, objects that are relevant to alcohol and drugs are one of the most important factors when describing the use of substances that should not be overlooked by cultural eyes. Sudhinaraset, Wigglesworth, and Takeuchi (2016) indicated that drinking is defined and shaped by the basic motifs of culture and is limited.

Alcohol consumption is deeply rooted in Turkish culture, a tradition spanning many years. This is because drinking is a well-known habit in Turkish society and a significant part of the alcohol culture among Turks. Alcohol use and the pleasure it provides have been the subject of literary works, particularly poetry. Ögel (2010) notes that kumis, which has existed since the earliest periods of Turkish history, was consumed daily as a food, that it was consumed instead of food when there was an excess of mare's milk, and that it was consumed by everyone from the youngest to the oldest, believed to cure many diseases, and called "the drink of the gods." Kumis is not the only drink consumed by Turks throughout history; this has led to a tavern culture that also includes wine and raki, a tradition that continues to the present day. In tavern culture, raki is not only an alcoholic beverage but also perceived as a drink that enhances and enhances conversations in social settings. The reason why a rakı table is called a "locksmith's table" is because the word "locksmith's table," meaning a locksmith opening doors, has become associated with the meaning of a rakı table; this implies revealing what is inside, and the meaning of the expression "let's drink, let's open it" comes from this (Şimşek, 2021). Furthermore, this perception regarding drug and alcohol use leads to the disregard of the dangerous extent of alcohol and substance abuse. In Turkish society, rakı is referred to as "lion's milk," a term that has led to the belief that it has a stimulating effect (Ögel, 2010). In Northern Cyprus, cannabis is called "gannavur" or "pleasure" by the community and is the most consumed substance among people; this has led to a belief that cannabis use is less harmful than smoking cigarettes (Çakıcı, Karaaziz, Babayiğit & Eş, 2020).

Cultural factors play a significant role in understanding psychoactive substance use. The literature emphasizes that attitudes toward psychotropic substance use are shaped not only by individual religious beliefs but also by the cultural norms, value systems, and socialization processes of society. A comprehensive review addressing the relationship between spirituality and addiction in a multidimensional way shows that the cultural context can either strengthen or weaken the influence of religious beliefs on substance use (Galanter et al., 2024). A study of 1326 Nunavimmiutlu individuals aged 16 and older found that local cultural identity, community involvement, and social ties directly affected substance use; some cultural practices were protective, while others increased risk (Courtemanche et al., 2024). Similarly, a qualitative study of 55 immigrant youth (22 women, 33 men) aged 16–30 from diverse cultural backgrounds, including India, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Hazara-Afghanistan, Myanmar (Chinese and Karen), Malaysia, Singapore, and China, showed that being caught between their own cultural values and the cultural norms of the society in which they lived shaped their substance use behaviors and motivations (Dandy et al., 2025).

Religion and Psychoactive Drug Use

The relationship between religion and psychotropic substance use is increasingly being studied within the context of individuals' belief systems and societal norms. Studies show that strong religious commitment and practice reduce alcohol and drug use, especially among young adults; this effect is explained by religious values increasing risk perception and strengthening behavioral control mechanisms (Livne et al., 2021; Rosmarin et al., 2023). A person's religious beliefs affect their behavior, as religious prohibitions and rewards reinforce or restrict their actions. Therefore, a person's attitude towards substance use is an important factor to consider. Attitudes influence human behavior, and a person's religious stance can determine their actions (Ok, 2011). It is known that the majority of Turks embrace Islam. According to Islam, alcohol and substances that impair healthy thinking are prohibited (Kahraman, 2010). Given this, alcohol use is likely influenced by this norm. Strong religious attitudes tend to lead to greater adherence to religious norms (Marsiglia et al., 2005). Religiosity has a positive effect on refusing alcohol, which can either prevent or protect individuals from alcohol abuse (Lin et al., 2020).

The studies reviewed in this review reveal a multifaceted relationship between psychoactive substance use and cultural and religious attitudes. Numerous quantitative and qualitative studies demonstrate that high levels of religious commitment have significant effects on substance use behaviors and attitudes toward such behaviors. In a prospective study conducted by Rosmarin et al., religious affiliation was found to significantly reduce the initiation of alcohol and psychoactive substance use during adolescence; individuals with strong religious commitment were reported to be less likely to start using

substances compared to those with a lower risk of use (Rosmarin et al., 2023). In support of these findings, more recent epidemiological data also reveal the effect of religiosity and spirituality on the course of psychoactive substance use. A large-scale population study by Hassan, Agabani, Ahmed, Shapiro, and Le Foll (2023) showed that high levels of religiosity and spirituality slowed the progression of substance use and, in particular, limited the development of risky use behaviors. This suggests that religious and spiritual orientations may have an impact not only on initiating substance use but also on its continuation and severity. A study involving 1348 Polish students from Krakow academies and universities found a significant correlation between spirituality and psychoactive substance use, with individuals having higher levels of spirituality showing a lower tendency towards substance use. This finding suggests that religious and spiritual factors continue to play a protective role among young adults as well (Chrost and Chrost, 2023).

Discussion

This study shows that there is a link between psychoactive substance use and cultural and religious attitudes. Although this link is less evident between tobacco and alcohol use and cultural and religious attitudes among Islamic People, OPD use has a stronger connection with cultural and religious attitudes.

This review indicates that sociocultural factors influence the use of psychoactive substances. Social and cultural environments, low socioeconomic status, and physical settings such as housing, urban development, and transportation can indirectly contribute to drug use (Spooner and Hetherington, 2005). Different types of psychological distress, like depression, low self-esteem, and stress, may lead adolescents to use drugs (Kelly, Chan, Mason, and Williams, 2015). Additionally, biological factors such as genetic differences can affect an individual's vulnerability to substance use (Gerring et al., 2024). Recently, many studies have also suggested a possible link between psychoactive substance use and acculturation. Acculturation can bring about changes in norms, attitudes, and routines related to illicit drug use (Altuner, Engin, Gürer, Akyay and Akgül, 2009; Şencan and Canatan, 2021). This idea is supported by numerous research findings. For instance, one study found that among Hispanics, measures of acculturation—particularly English language preference and longer residence in the United States—were significantly associated with Drug Use Disorder (Blanco et al., 2013). Conversely, some research shows opposing results, suggesting that acculturation may not influence drug use. Data from the 1999 and 2000 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) in the U.S. indicates that the prevalence of substance use was lower among foreign-born individuals than among U.S.-born individuals (Gfroerer and Tan, 2003).

The study showed that different communities have distinct cultural attitudes. Çakıcı et al. (2015), in their household study covering the general TRNC population and comparing those with and without gambling problems, found that Cypriots, who exhibit separation of cultural attitudes, and Turks, who demonstrate assimilation, tend to have higher rates of problem and pathological gambling. Çakıcı et al. (2014) stated that every society has its unique socio-cultural characteristics, and not only immigrant populations but also local cultural attitudes can influence problem and pathological gambling. Fosados et al. (2007, 2990) indicated that acculturation relates to alcohol and drug use among Latino adolescents in Southern California; assimilation was negatively associated with current alcohol use among males, while separation was positively associated with current alcohol use among females. Marginalization was linked to a significant lifetime risk of alcohol and drug use among men and current drug use among women. Bayramoğlu (2016) noted differences in cultural attitudes toward OPD use between Turkey-born and Cyprus-born university students in Cyprus. Turkey-born students tend to adopt more separatist attitudes than non-users, whereas Cyprus-born OPD users did not display any particular cultural attitudes relative to non-users. While gambling problems and pathological gambling are more prevalent among Cypriots, OPD use is more widespread among Turkish university students (Çakıcı et al., 2019). Communities react differently to social issues and maintain different cultural attitudes toward OPD. Each society reflects its own unique cultural attitudes.

This study showed that different communities have varying effects on tobacco, alcohol, and OPD use. In Bayramoğlu's (2016) study, individuals who have high religious attitudes showed lower rates of alcohol and OPD use, but religious attitudes had a mild relationship with tobacco use among both Cypriots and Turks. Kahraman et al. (2010) stated that drinking alcohol is strictly forbidden by the Islamic religion. Therefore, religiosity is one of the most important elements that can hinder individual substance use (Van der Meer Sanchez et al., 2008). Many studies indicate that religion can reduce drug use rates or protect individuals from substance abuse (Gomes et al., 2012). Çakıcı et al. (2014) stated that ignoring religion is one of the risk factors for illicit drug use. Another study in Turkey showed similar results, indicating that religion is a protective factor against substance use (Yalçın et al., 2009). The 2015 household study in North Cyprus revealed that the importance given to religion cannot prevent the use of illicit drugs among Cypriots (Çakıcı et al., 2015).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study shows that there is a link between substance use and cultural and religious beliefs. Communities display different religious and cultural perspectives on tobacco, alcohol, and OPD use. Every society is shaped by its own socio-cultural background's religious and cultural views. These attitudes can influence the use of various psychoactive substances to different extents. In some societies, alcohol use is more impacted by religious beliefs, while OPD use is affected by both religious and cultural views. However, tobacco use does not seem to be influenced by religious or cultural factors. In other communities, different religious and cultural beliefs might have a stronger effect on psychoactive substance use. Therefore, when creating public health policies to prevent substance use, it is important to consider sociocultural and religious beliefs. Approaches to prevent psychoactive substance use should be tailored to each society's unique conditions and specific socio-cultural environment.

Declarations

Ethical Approval

Not Applicable.

Permission to Publicate
Not Applicable.

Availability of Data and Materials
Not Applicable.

Conflict of Interest
The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Funding
Not Applicable.

Author Contributions
RB conducted the study under the guidance of her advisor, MÇ. All authors contributed to the research process. The concept and design of the study were carried out by RB, MÇ, and SO. RB and SO prepared the introduction, discussion, conclusion, and recommendations sections of the article, while MÇ and SO contributed by analyzing the data and creating the methods, findings, and tables. All authors have read and approved the final version of the study.

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